



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Thursday, November 2, 2006
Media Contact:
Cody Craynor
Public Information Officer
801-538-6232

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Tribal Consultation will be signed today, Thursday, November 2, 2006 at 3 p.m. in Governor Huntsman's Board Room at the Capitol Complex. The signing meeting will last for about 25 minutes and is open to the news media.*

Governor, Utah Department of Health & Utah's Indian Tribes Sign Health Consultation Policy

SALT LAKE CITY – Today Governor Jon Huntsman Jr., the Utah Department of Health and representatives from Utah's eight federally recognized Indian tribes signed a tribal consultation agreement to improve coordination and communication processes regarding important health issues and health policy development.

Tribal Consultation is the formalized process between Tribal, State and Federal governments by which all involved parties agree to an open exchange of information that can facilitate a better understanding of health related issues. The ultimate goal of the consultation process is to improve the way health services are delivered and coordinated between these governments.

There are approximately 33,000 American Indians (AI) who live in Utah. They face the greatest challenges in our state with regard to poverty rates and have poorer health outcomes than the general population overall. More than one third of Utah's AI children live at or below the poverty level, which has a significant impact on health outcomes.

"The consultation agreement suggests forms of communication that emphasize trust, respect and shared responsibility, and encourages an open and free exchange of information and opinions, regarding health issues affecting American Indians in Utah," said Governor Jon Huntsman Jr. "Consultation is integral to a deliberative process that results in an effective collaboration and informed decision making."

The Consultation process includes the following components:

- An initial meeting to present the intent and broad scope of the policy to the Utah Indian Health Advisory Board;
- Discussions at the Utah Indian Health Advisory Board meeting to more fully understand the specifics and impact of the proposed policy initiation or change;
- Open meeting for all interested parties to receive information or provide comment;
- A presentation by tribal representatives of their concerns and potential impact of the proposed policy;
- Continued meetings until concerns over intended policy have been fully discussed;
- A written response from the Department of Health to tribal leaders as to the action on or outcome of tribal concerns.

“Signing of the agreement enhances consultation efforts already underway in Utah,” said Dr. David N. Sundwall, executive director, UDOH. “Our state leads the way in the western region for establishing a formal process for working with Tribal governments on health issues.”

“For example, some of Utah’s tribes are located in very isolated rural and frontier parts of the state,” Sundwall added. “The UDOH has been consulting with Utah Indian Health Advisory Board (UIHAB) representatives, tribal leaders and tribal health and emergency management programs to develop emergency preparedness plans that coordinate with state and local emergency systems.”

“I firmly believe that the Tribes in this great State of Utah have been positively affected by this consultation process which has allowed the Utah Tribes to be a part of developing policies and procedures,” said Lora Tom, chairwoman, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah. “This event is indeed a milestone for the Tribes from the largest to smallest with similar needs with one another.”

Utah’s eight federally recognized Indian tribes include the Confederated Tribes of Goshute Indians, Navajo Nation, Northern Ute Tribe, Northwestern Band of Shoshone, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, San Juan Southern Paiute, Skull Valley Band of Goshute and White Mesa Band of the Ute Mountain Ute.

###

The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.